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ABSTRACT

This document contains three papers from a symposium on motivation for learning and performance that was conducted as part of a conference on human resource development (HRD). "A Holistic Approach towards Motivation To Learn" (Constantine Kontoghiorghes) reports on a study that identified the following key variables within and outside the learning environment as the most important predictors for motivation to learn during training: task autonomy, extrinsic rewards, organizational orientation toward quality improvement, and a work environment where people live up to high ethical standards. "Nonprofit Learning Organizations: Issues for Human Resource Development" (Susan Kay McHargue) reports on a study of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) as learning organizations that revealed the existence of a direct relationship between learning organization dimensions and resources and performance in NPOs and supported the need for HRD in NPOs. "Employee Perceptions of the Meaning of Empowerment" (Mark S. Rulle, Neal Chalofsky) reports on a study that explored nonsupervisory employees' perceptions of the meaning of empowerment and resulted in the identification of the following major themes that function independently as aspects of empowerment: impact, competence, autonomy, meaning of work, and relationship with supervisor. All three papers contain substantial bibliographies. (MN)

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2000 AHRD Conference

Motivation for Learning and Performance

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A Holistic Approach Towards Motivation to Learn

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The purpose of this study was to identify key variables within and outside the learning context that could affect motivation to learn during training. Task autonomy, extrinsic rewards, organizational orientation toward quality improvement, and a work environment within which people live up to high ethical standards were found to be the most important predictors for motivation to learn during training.

Keywords: Learning, Motivation,Work Environment

According to DeSimone and Harris (1998), learning can be defined as"a relatively permanent change in behavior, cognition, or affect that occurs as a result ofone's interaction with theenvironment" (p. 56). DeSimone and Harris further statethat "learning is an important part of all HRD efforts. Whether you are training carpenter's apprentice to use a power saw, conducting a workshop to teach managers to use to discipline more effectively, or trying to get meatpackers to understand and follow new safety procedures, your goal is to change behavior, knowledge, or attitudes throughlearning" (p. 56). DeSimone and Harris (1998) make the point that HRD professionals and supervisors who understand the learning process and how to create environments that facilitate learning can design and implement more effective HRD programs.

When it comes to maximizing learning outcomes, researchers have identified three factors that are perceived to affect learning: (1) trainee personal characteristics; (2) training design; and (3) training transfer climate (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; DeSimone & Harris, 1998).

Briefly, training design"involves adapting the learning environment to maximize learning. Training design issues include (a) the conditions of practice that affect learning, and (b) the factors that affect retention of what learned" (DeSimone & Harris, 1998; p. 64). In terms of the training transfer climate factor, researchers have shown that the degree to which learning is transferred back to the job greatly depends on how conducive the work environment is towards learningIn particular, supervisory and coworker support for new learning, task cues - the degree to which characteristics oftrainee's job prompt or remind him or her to use new skills and knowledge acquired in training, and a continuous-learning culture have been found to be significantly associated with training transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Clark,Dobbins, & Ladd, 1993; Rouillier & Goldstein, 1993; Tracey, Tannenbaum, & Kavangh, 1995).

In terms of trainee personal characteristics, the personal attributes of trainability, personality, and attitudes have been found by researchers to affect learning. Some of the personality traits that have been identified as influential factors during learning are locus of control, need for achievement, independence, extraversion, openness to experience, and cognitive playfulness (DeSimone & Harris, 1998). As far as attitudes toward learning are concerned, research byNoe (1986) has shown that "an employee's attitudes toward career exploration and job involvement have an effect on both learning and its applications to the job" (DeSimone & Harris; p. 64). Trainability, finally, refers to the degree to which a learner has the motivation and ability to learn as well as perceives the work environment to be supportive of learning.

According to DeSimone and Harris (1998), "trainability is an important factor in HRD. Placing employees in programs they are not motivated to attend or are not prepared to do well in can waste time andresources" (p. 61). The importance of identifying the factors that affect motivation to learn during training, therefore, cannot be overemphasized. With regard to the importance of understanding the motivation to learn construct, Clark et al. (1993) stated the following:

> Recently, several individuals (e.g.,Noe, 1986) have recognized that motivation to learn is critical for training effectiveness and that researchers need to identify factors that foster such motivation. Without motivation to learn, the most sophisticated training program cannot be effective. A common complaint of trainers is that trainees enter the training environment with little motivation to learn and thus training is doomed to fail from the beginning. Hence it is important that the training literature develop a better understanding of the motivation-to-learn construct and the factors that affect it. (p. 293)

Clark et al. (1993) further stated that despite its importance, the construct of motivation to learn has been largely neglected in training research. The authors attempted to address this research gap by conducting a structural equations

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modeling study. The purpose of the study was to explore the effects of several contextual factors on training motivation. Their survey instrument was designed to measure training motivation, expected job and career utility of training, peer and supervisor training transfer climate, involvement in decision to be trained, and decision-maker credibility.

The structural equations model for Clark's et al. (1993) study was built upon expectancy theory. The underlying premise for the model was that training motivation is a direct function of the extent to which the trainee believes that training will result in either job utility or career utility. Clark et al. (1993) defined career utility as "the perceived usefulness of training for attainment of career goals, such as getting a raise or promotion, or taking a more fulfilling job" (p. 294). Job utility at the same time was defined as "the perceived usefulness of the training course to facilitate goals associated with the current job, such as increased productivity, reduced errors, or better problem-solving skills" (Clark et al., 1993; p. 294).

In summary, the structural equations modeling study by Clark et al. (1993) revealed the following important findings: (a) perceived job and career utility of training significantly predicts training motivation, (b) involvement in the decision to be trained results in higher perceptions of job and career utility, (c) the credibility of the individual recommending or requesting training affects job and career utility, and (d) perceived supervisory support for training transfer affects anticipated job utility and thus motivation to learn during training. However, Clark et al. (1993) pointed out that a limitation of their study was that not all variables affecting training motivation were included in it. In particular the excluded variables of job involvement, organizational commitment, and achievement motivation were cited as being important to motivation to learn but not included in their study.

The construct of pretraining motivation was researched further by Facteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd, and Kudisch (1995). Through structural equations analysis with LISREL VII the authors of this study attempted to determine whether trainees' general perceptions of the training environment had an influence on pretraining motivation as well as training transfer. Morever, the authors attempted to determine the degree to which pretraining motivation and training transfer were influenced by social support for training and task constraints in the work environment. Social support for training was defined in terms four organizational constituents - top management, supervisors, peers, and subordinates, while task constraints as lack of resources.

Training incentives was also used as a predictor in this study. Training incentives was defined in terms intrinsic incentives - the degree to which trainees believed a variety of intrinsic benefits were likely to result from successful completion of training, extrinsic incentives - the degree to which training would result in such tangible external rewards as pay raise and promotions, and compliance - the degree to which training was taken because it was mandated by the organization. Other predictors that were used in this study were: (a) career exploration and planning; (b) organizational commitment; (c) support for training transfer; and (d) training reputation.

In short, the Facteau et al. (1995) study found training reputation, intrinsic and compliance incentives, organization commitment, perceived training transfer and three social support variables (subordinates, supervisor, and top management) to be predictors of pretraining motivation. However, unlike previous studies, extrinsic incentives as well as career exploration and career planning were not found to be significantly related to pretraining motivation.

Facteau et al. (1995) concluded their study by once again stressing the importance of examining the organizational context within which training exists when investigating training motivation. Some organizational factors that were cited as relevant to the study of pretraining motivation were the organizations' strategic plans, layoff policies, emphasis on employee development and continual learning, creation of self-managed work teams, and climate.

Purpose of the Study

Given the scarcity and limitations of research on the important area of motivation to learn, the main purpose of this study was to bridge some of the above stated research gaps by identifying the key variables within and outside the learning context that could affect motivation to learn during training. What distinguishes this study from previous ones is that it takes a more holistic approach towards training motivation by incorporating in its design organizational variables that are also perceived to affect motivation to perform. Given that the ultimate goal of training is to enhance performance, the underlined premise of this study is that motivation to learn will not only be affected by the immediate learning environment, but the organizational variables that affect performance as well. Therefore, this study assumes that a trainee will be more motivated to learn during training if he/she is a member of a high performance system which in turn expects and rewards exemplary performance.

Theoretical Framework

Aside from the previously cited research pertaining to the motivation to learn construct, the theoretical framework of this study was also based on the sociotechnical systems (STS), total quality management (TQM), and training transfer theories

and research which in turn furnished the training and organizational variables projected to have an influence on employee and organizational performance. Briefly, this study incorporated in its design the following learning and organizational dimensions: training transfer climate; learning climate ; management practices; employee involvement; organizational structure; communication systems; reward systems; job design; innovation practices; technology management; teamwork climate; ethical work culture; and process improvement climate. Organizational performance was defined in terms of the following dimensions: quality, productivity, job satisfaction, and rate of new technology adaptation.

Research Questions

In short, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the degree of association between each of the identified training transfer climate, learning, and organizational dimensions with motivation to learn during training?
2. To what extent is a high performance system, as defined by the STS and TQM theories, associated with motivation to learn during training?

Methodology

Instrument

The instrument for this study consisted of a 99 Likert item questionnaire which was designed to assess the organization in terms of the earlier described dimensions. Many of the dimensions were assessed with scales that were used or described in previous instruments or research , while several were designed specifically for this study. The questionnaire was pilot-tested on a group of 15 participants before the main study for clarity. Moreover, a group of seven experts reviewed the instrument for content validity.

Subjects

The sampling frame of this study consisted of 35 employees of a small distribution and light manufacturing firm, 30 employees of an engineering firm, 10 employees of a small manufacturing firm that attended total quality management training, and 54 salaried employees of a large Midwestern Bank who were asked to complete the questionnaire after attending technical training. Given that all but 35 of the participants have returned their questionnaire (94/129) the response rate of this study so far is calculated at 72.9%. In all, 63.6% of the respondents were males and 36.4% females. In terms of education, 31.7% of all respondents were high school graduates, 13.4% obtained an associates degree, 35.4% had a bachelors, 15.9% a masters, and 3.7% a PhD. Lastly, 31.1% of the participants were hourly employees, 4.4% were administrative personnel, 36.7% were salaried employees, 11.1% held a supervisor's job, while 12.2% and 4.4% were middle and senior managers respectively.

Data Analysis

Once all the data from all participants was collected, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze it. With regard to research question 1, correlational and regression analyses were used to describe the extent to which the identified training transfer climate, learning, and organizational dimensions are associated with motivation to learn during training. Correlational and regression analyses were also used to answer research question 2 and thus determine the extent to which a high performance system, as defined by the STS and TQM theories, is associated with training motivation. Coefficient alpha of the instrument was calculated at 0.97 which indicates that the instrument is highly reliable.

Results

As shown in Table 1, the motivation to learn variable was found to be significantly correlated with 30 of the 99 variables of the questionnaire. The correlations ranged from 0.215 to 0.399 and covered variables from a variety of dimensions. With regard to the learning and training transfer dimensions, motivation to learn during training was found to exhibit the highest

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association with the variables that dealt with rewards for learning, especially extrinsic rewards, as well as with the degree to which the trainee is held accountable for training received. Interestingly enough, task cues and supervisory support for new skills and knowledge, two of the strongest predictors of training transfer, were not found to be significantly correlated with motivation to learn. Other learning and training transfer variables that were not found to be significantly associated with motivation to learn during training were: reduced workload upon return from training, having input into the type of training the employee attends, and clearly stated training program goals and objectives.

In terms of the other organizational dimensions, motivation to learn during training was found to be significantly correlated with variables form the job design, teamwork, and innovative/competitive organization dimensions. Moreover, motivation to learn was found to be associated with a work environment that is characterized by a high degree of employee involvement, high ethical standards, and flexible policies and structures. Within such an environment coworkers produce at the expected level, employees are praised by their supervisor for outstanding performance and the system regards people as more important than technology. It is important to note that the variable that was found to exhibit the highest correlation ($r = 0.399$, $p < 001$) with motivation to learn was the task autonomy variable of having influence over the things that determine how one's work gets done.

In all, motivation to learn during training was found to be more highly associated with the following variables: the degree to which one has influence over the things that determine how his/her work gets done ($r = 0.399$, $p < 001$); the degree to which learning is well rewarded ($r = 0.364$, $p < 001$); the degree to which one receives such extrinsic rewards as pay and promotion when applying new skills and knowledge acquired in training ($r = 0.360$, $p < 001$); the degree to which the organization regards people as more important than technology ($r = 0.353$, $p < 001$); the degree to which one has independence and freedom in how he/she does the work ($r = 0.346$, $p < 001$); the degree to which coworkers produce at the expected level ($r = 0.327$, $p < 001$); and the degree to which one's job requires skill variety ($r = 0.305$, $p < 001$).

The results of the stepwise regression analysis of the motivation to learn during training variable is shown in Tables 2 and 3. As it is shown in Table 2, the produced regression model accounted for almost 33% of the total variance of the dependent variable and it incorporated in its design four independent variables. Task autonomy, or having influence over the things that determine how one's job gets done, accounted for 14.8% of the total variance and it can thus be considered as the most important predictor ($b = 0.364$; $p = 0.001$) of this regression model. Receiving such extrinsic rewards as pay and promotion when applying the skills and knowledge acquired in training ($b = 0.282$; $p = 0.011$) was the second variable selected by the regression model and accounted for 7% of the total variance. The extent to which quality improvement has higher strategic priority than short-term financial gains ($b = 0.351$; $p = 0.002$) and people live up to high ethical standards ($b = 0.288$; $p = 0.011$) were the last two variables selected by the regression model and accounted for 5.4% and 5.7% of the total variance respectively. Given the high tolerance values depicted in Table 3, one may conclude that multicollinearity was not a problem for this regression model.

Summary and Conclusions

In terms of previous research, this study agrees with Clark's et al. (1993) conclusion that career utility, or the perceived usefulness of training for attainment of such career goals as raise or promotion, is a significant predictor of training motivation. This in turn contradicts Facteau's et al. finding according to which extrinsic incentives is not a significant predictor of pretraining motivation. However, unlike Clark's et al. study, this study failed to show an association between supervisory support for training transfer and motivation to learn during training. Motivation to learn during training was instead found to exhibit a low to moderate correlation ($r = 0.250$, $p < 0.05$) with supervisory praise and recognition for outstanding performance.

In summary, what the regression model of this study suggests is that motivation to learn during training will be predominantly depended on the extent to which the trainee holds a job that assures him or her task autonomy, he or she expects to receive such extrinsic rewards as pay and promotion when applying newly acquired skills and knowledge and functions in a quality driven organization within which people live up to high ethical standards. In

Table 1. Significant Correlations of Motivation to Learn with Learning and Work Environment Variables

	Motivation To Learn
Learning and Training Transfer Variables	
Have all necessary skills/knowledge to perform my job at the expected level	$r = 0.250^{*}$ (N = 87)

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Right people are sent to training	r = 0.261* (N = 87)
Coworkers praise and recognize application of new skills and knowledge	r = 0.283** (N = 86)
Held accountable for received training	r = 0.298** (N = 86)
Receive extrinsic rewards (pay and promotion) when applying new skills/knowledge	r = 0.360** (N = 83)
Overall, learning is well rewarded	r = 0.364** (N = 87)
Job Design Variables	
Receive fair pay for work I do	r = 0.246* (N = 85)
My job requires skill variety	r = 0.305** (N = 86)
Have independence and freedom in how I do the work	r = 0.346** (N = 86)
Have influence over the things that determine how my work gets done	r = 0.399** (N = 87)
Teamwork Variables	
People are rewarded for teamwork not as individuals	r = 0.235* (N = 86)
Member of self-directed work team	r = 0.239* (N = 86)
Have influence on performance ratings peers receive	r = 0.289** (N = 86)
Innovative/Competitive Organization Variables	
Very innovative organization	r = 0.253* (N = 85)
Very competitive organization	r = 0.259* (N = 85)
Risktaking is not punished	r = 0.270* (N = 84)
Performance Indicators	
External customers are satisfied with quality of our services	r = 0.243* (N = 84)
Coworkers produce at the expected level	r = 0.327** (N = 85)
Work Environment variables	
People put in above minimum effort to help the organization succeed	r = 0.215* (N = 86)
Have easy accessibility to others I need in order to perform my job	r = 0.216* (N = 87)
Organizational policies and structures are flexible	r = 0.225* (N = 83)
Organization has strong commitment to me	r = 0.229* (N = 87)
Supervisors challenge people to improve the system	r = 0.233* (N = 86)
Few policies restrict innovation	r = 0.244* (N = 84)
I am very satisfied with this company	r = 0.247* (N = 86)
Receive praise/recognition for outstanding performance from supervisor	r = 0.250* (N = 86)
High degree of employee involvement	r = 0.252* (N = 87)
Decision making involvement	r = 0.274* (N = 87)
People live up to high ethical standards	r = 0.283** (N = 86)
People are more important than technology	r = 0.353** (N = 85)

*. Pearson correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**. Pearson correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2. Stepwise Regression Model for Motivation to Learn During Training[a,b]

Variables	Adjusted	Std. Error of the

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Model	Entered	Removed	R	R^2	R^2	Estimate
1	Have influence over the things that determine how my work gets done		.399	.159	.148	1.04
2	Receive extrinsic rewards when applying new skills and knowledge	.	.490	.240	.218	0.99
3	QI has higher strategic priority than short-term financial gain	.	.549	.302	.272	0.96
4	People live up to high ethical standards	.	.605	.366	329	0.92

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Output Per Unit Time N = 72

b. Method: Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove >= .100).

Table 3. Beta Coefficients for Motivation to Learn During Training Regression Model

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.169	0.640		3.389	.001		
Have influence over the things that determine how my work gets done	349	0.095	.364	3.679	.000	.952	1.050
Receive extrinsic rewards when applying new S&K	248	0.094	.282	2.632	.011	.813	1.230
QI has higher strategic priority than short-term financial gain	337	0.103	.351	3.282	.002	.816	1.225
People live up to high ethical standards	303	0.115	.288	2.629	.011	.776	1.289

essence, this finding confirms the earlier stated underlying assumption of this study and proves that training motivation is indeed also related to organizational variables that directly or indirectly affect employee or organizational performance. The fact that 24 out of the 30 significant correlations depicted in Table 1 pertained to the association between motivation to learn and the identified TQM and STS job and work environment variables, attests to the validity of this conclusion.

Another significant finding of this study is the identification of task autonomy as a more important predictor for training motivation than all 15 learning and training transfer variables incorporated in the study. Given that task autonomy has often been cited by scholars (French & Bell, 1995;Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Pasmore, 1988) as a predictor for job motivation as well, this finding exemplifies the point that training motivation and training effectiveness in general cannot be studied in isolation. Rather, researchers should view training as another performance improvement intervention which is directly or indirectly affected by all other systemic factors perceived to affect employee or organizational performance.

How does this Research Contributes to New Knowledge in HRD?

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As stated in the introduction, several scholars have recognized that motivation to learn is critical for training effectiveness and that researchers need to identify the factors that foster such motivation. By taking a holistic approach to learning motivation, and thus identifying new variables in the broader work environment that can facilitate the learning process, this empirical study was be able to assist the HRD field in three ways a) bridge some the research gaps with regard motivation to learn; b) significantly contribute new knowledge in an area which often directly affects the success of many HRD efforts; and c) assist learning organization theorists operationalize the work environment in terms of dimensions that are conducive to a learning environment. In terms of future research, this study has identified at least one new important predictor (task autonomy) for the motivation to learn construct. Given the small sample size associated with this study, however, the conduction of future research with regard to the examination of the relationship between task autonomy and motivation to learn will help determine the extent towhich such an association is indeed an important one.

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Nonprofit Learning Organizations: Issues for Human Resource Development

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Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) play a significant social and economic role in our society, yet they are facing ever-increasing changes that impact their performance and survival. To cope with the changes and challenges they face and to achieve a high level of competence, NPOs, as well as for-profit organizations, must be learning organizations. A study of this issue revealed that there is a direct relationship between learning organization dimensions and resources and performance in NPOs. Findings support the need for HRD in NPOs, and point to the unique and specific concerns that might impact learning in the nonprofit sector.

Keywords: Nonprofit Learning Organization, Nonprofit Performance, Nonprofit human resources

The growing economic and social significance of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in our country is widely discussed in literature (Hodgkinson, Weitzman, Abrahams, Crutchfield, & Stevenson, 1996; Drucker, 1990; Dees, 1998); Pappas, 1996). NPOs assume a vital share of the responsibility for meeting public needs that neither government nor business can meet. Statistics show that these organizations have expenses roughly equivalent to 6% of the nation's total economy (Wilbur, Finn, & Freeland, 1994), and are America's largest employer when you consider the total number of their workers and volunteers (Drucker, 1990).

While the role of NPOs is significant, so too are the challenges these organizations face. As discussed in the current literature (Dees, 1998; Hammack and Young 1993; Hodgkinson et al., 1996), these challenges include growing controversies and scrutiny, an increasing complexity of social issues, ever-increasing costs and diminished funding, particularly public funding, and competition from for-profit businesses and other nonprofits. These trends are creating more business-like NPOs. Funders, as well as the general public, expect efficiency of administration and effectiveness in service outcomes.

Nonprofit Learning Organizations

To achieve a high level of competence and cope with the changes and challenges they face, NPOs, as well as for-profit organizations, must be learning organizations (Garratt, 1987; Garvin, 1993; Marquardt, 1996, Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1993, 1996). Learning organizations subscribe to an ongoing learning process that continually increases their capacity, both for change and performance. The learning is systemic and improves and empowers the organization, leading to a higher intent of service and education to a larger world. Yet time for learning and the formalization of human resource development (HRD) in these agencies is probably last on their agenda, due to heavy work loads (NPOs are labor-intensive), lack of funding, and weak internal systems and structures for doing so. One dilemma is that donors no longer simply give to an organization, but earmark dollars for a specific program. Money is intended to provide client services, with minimal amounts spent for operations or training. This can restrict the organization's initiative and ability for learning by their workers, let alone the funding for staff, even minimal, whose concerns focus on the development of their personnel. This problem is put in perspective when one considers that most NPOs are young and small, with limited internal structure to make HRD possible. Nearly seventy-five percent of all charitable 501(c)(3) organizations have been founded since 1970, and seventy-two percent of those organizations that filed IRS forms in 1993 had expenses of less than $500,000 (Hodgkinson et al., 1996).

Learning and Performance. Research with action plans must be developed to guide donors and constituents of NPOs toward new ways of thinking about funding and the importance of HRD in these organizations. NPOs cannot afford that funding for personnel development and training be seen as an unwarranted or unaffordable expense. One such way to do this is to relate learning to performance. Donors and the public in general want to know that the NPO is engaging their monies in ways that will increase performance. For NPOs, the performance bottom line is service and service outcomes, which may be reflected in financial performance, learning performance, and mission

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performance. A recent study (McHargue, 1999) shows that there is a direct relationship between learning organization dimensions and performance in NPOs.

The major objective of this study was to examine the relationships between learning organization dimensions and resources in performance in nonprofit 501(c)(3) human service organizations in the nation. To do this, the mission performance measures for nonprofit human service organizations were identified and made operational, and the financial and knowledge performance measures which have been developed and successfully studied in the for-profit sector (Watkins & Marsick, 1997a, *Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire*) were adapted for use in the nonprofit setting.

The conceptual model guiding the study is shown in Figure 1.

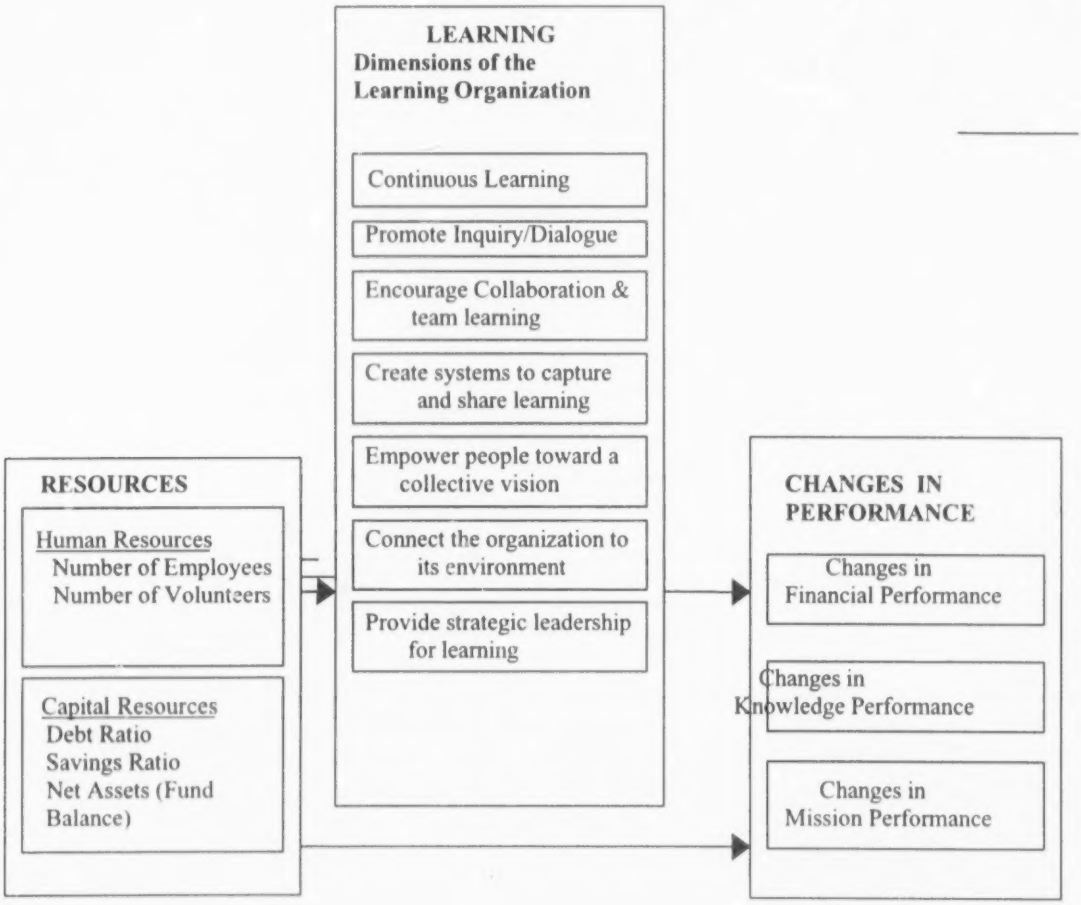


Figure 1
Conceptual Model Guiding the Study

The resource segment of the model is adapted from Lawler, Nadler, & Cammann's (1980) model of an organizational behavior system. Another model (Herman & Renz, 1997) from a study on health and welfare charities also identified some of the sample organization characteristics relating to organizational effectiveness. The learning organization behaviors in the conceptual model were taken from the theoretical framework for the study, Watkins and Marsick's *Sculpting the Learning Organization* (1993), and their edited book *In Action: Creating the learning organization* (1996).

We wanted to answer the following four questions: To what extent do learning organization dimensions independently explain observed variances in nonprofit performance? To what extent do select nonprofit organization characteristics independently explain observed variances in learning organization dimensions? To what extent do select nonprofit organization characteristics independently explain observed variances in nonprofit performance? To what extent can learning organization dimensions and select nonprofit organization characteristics jointly explain the observed variances in nonprofit performance?

The significance of the findings of this study for human resource developers is that they will be able to more effectively approach nonprofit learning and development. Even though the nonprofit sector is naïve about what it takes to invest in their paid staff or their volunteers (Pappas, 1996), there is an increasing need for ongoing education and training (Dees, 1998). The present study supports the theory that learning organization dimensions can be applied successfully in the nonprofit sector.

For-Profit to Nonprofit Issues

To better develop learning and to improve performance in NPOs, one must first understand the distinct differences and the similarities between this sector and for-profit organizations. Although Kerka (1995) stated that any type of organization can be a learning organization, there are differences as well as similarities between NPOs and for-profit organizations that should be noted and may impact the strategies for becoming a learning organization. Table 1 presents a compilation of some of the unique features of the NPO. While these characteristics are not true in every case, they are true enough to be considered a common distinction.

Table 1
A Comparison of Some Characteristics of Nonprofit and For-Profit Organizations

Source	Nonprofit Organization	For-Profit Organization
Drucker (1990)	•Source of money: donors •Goal: service •Product: changed client •Do not get paid for performance •A multitude of stakeholders •Results are always outside the organization •Manage volunteer base	•Source of money: customer •Goal: profit •Product: goods and services •Customer pays for performance •The customer, employee and owner are stakeholders •Results typically inside organization •Paid employees
Pappas (1996	•Driven by mission •Service is an end in itself •Customers drain finances	•Driven by bottom line •Service is a strategy •Customers provide finances
Keating and Keating (1980)	•Monopoly suppliers of services to a single market •Less reliance on financial rewards	•Competitive product market •Greater reliance on financial rewards
Young (1983)	•Slower to respond to pressures of marketplace	•Driven to rapid response through lure of income
Anthony and Young (1990)	•Labor intensive •Services cannot be stored •Difficult to measure quality of intangible services •Less freedom of choice on goals and strategies •Provide service as directed by an outside agency •Indirect link between finances and benefits •New client could be seen as a drain on resources	•Workflow dominated or paced by machinery •Goods can be stored in inventory •Tangible goods can be inspected before delivery •Greater liberty to choose goals and strategies •Service provision decided by management or board •Direct connection between product and revenue •New client pursued for additional revenue

The difficulty some NPOs currently face is to work effectively within two distinct organizational frameworks: to think and act nonprofit and for-profit at the same time. In other words, NPOs compete in a volatile for-profit world to keep their services funded, and yet they must remain true to their nonprofit mission and constituents. They must market their services differently because they are selling something intangible to donor/customers who will not benefit directly from the product (Hammack and Young (1993).

Another distinct feature of the NPO is the wide diversity of its constituents. NPOs work with paid staff as well as volunteers, clients, boards, and donors. Hodgkinson and Weitzman (1992) report that volunteers provide the equivalent of nine million full-time employees to the nonprofit work force. Boards also provide unique governing functions in the NPO (Axelrod, 1994). The board of directors is usually made up of volunteers whose members come from differing backgrounds, rather than stockholders, professional managers, or government officials, as in business. Kanter and Summers (1987) suggest that the varying standards of clients, donors, and others in a NPO create organizational rigidities that make innovation and change difficult. Learning and personnel development may also be more challenging.

Method

Participants. The population of interest for this study was human service 501(c)(3) NPOs in the nation. Names and addresses for the study were generated from the Urban Institute's NCCS Core File, 1997 data base, the sampling frame for the study. This data is produced annually and is based on the 1997 IRS Form 990 Return Transaction File. A total of slightly over 6,000 organizations fit the sample characteristics: be in existence five years or more, and have a budget of $1 million or more. A survey was mailed to the leaders of 617 randomly selected organizations. A total of 264 NPOs who met the study criteria responded. The adjusted response rate was 44%, and is above the response range of 25% to 40% reported in other studies of NPOs. Of the participants, 73% held an executive position, 22% held an administrative position, 3% held a professional position, and 1% were hourly employees.

Analyses. Bivariate and exploratory multiple regression analyses were used to answer the four research questions.

Results

Question 1. To what extent do learning organization dimensions independently explain observed variances in nonprofit performance? O f the learning organization variables, s*ystems to capture learning* showed the strongest relationship with both *financial performance* (β=.49) (r^2=.24) and *knowledge performance* (β=.47)(r^2=.22), while *continuous learning* (β=.33) (r^2=.11) showed the strongest relationship with *mission performance.*

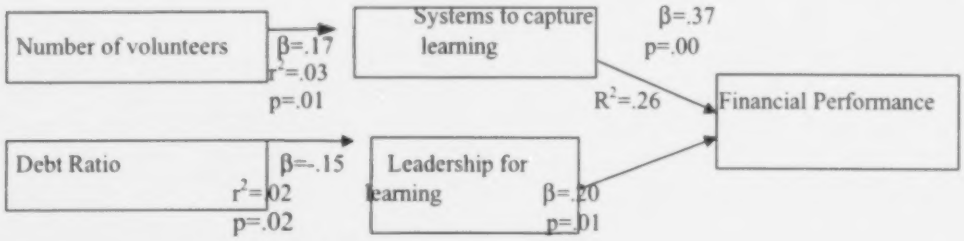
Question 2. To what extent do select nonprofit organization characteristics independently explain observed variances in learning organization dimensions? One organization characteristic, *debt ratio,* predicted more of the *learning organization* variables than either *human resources* or the other capital resources *of net assets* (*fund balance*) or *savings ratio.* The *debt ratio* was calculated to show the relationship of liabilities to assets. A negative showing is actually a positive outcome. *Debt ratio* showed a negative relationship with *continuous learning* (β=-.13) (r2=.02), *systems to capture learning* (β=-.12)(r^2=.02), *connect to the environment* (β=-.18) r^2=.03) and *leadership for learning* (β=-.15)(r^2=.02). The strongest relationship overall was between *connection to the environment* and *debt ratio* (β=.18) (r^2=.03). *Systems to capture learning* and *number of volunteers* (β=.17)(r^2=.03) showed the second strongest relationship.

Question 3. To what extent do select nonprofit organization characteristics independently explain observed variances in nonprofit performance? Of the twenty-four possible relationships, only three were significant. Two of these, *debt ratio* to *knowledge performance* (β=-.13)(r^2=.02) and *savings ratio* to *mission performance* (β=-.15) (r^2=.02) were significant at the $p<.05$ level. One relationship, *debt ratio* to *financial performance* (β=-.17)(r^2=.03) was significant at the $p<.01$ level. Note that the *debt ratio* and *savings ratio* show a negative relationship. These calculations show the relationship of liabilities to assets (*debt ratio*) and surplus (the revenue less expenses) to expenses (*savings ratio*). As discussed above, a negative showing is actually a positive outcome. *Human resources* (*number of employees* and *number of volunteers*), as well as the *age of the organization* and *net assets* (*fund balances*) were not significantly related with any of the *performance measures.* In summary, of the *organizational characteristics, debt ratio* related most frequently and at the highest level with both *learning organization dimensions* and *performance measures*, specifically *financial performance* and *knowledge performance.* Four of the

six resource variables (*employees*, *volunteers*, *age of organization*, and *net assets*) were not significantly related to *performance*.

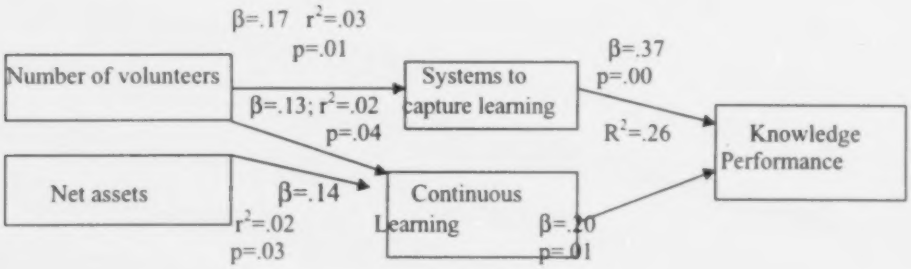
Question 4. To what extent can learning organization dimensions and select nonprofit organization characteristics jointly explain the observed variances in nonprofit performance? The findings resulted in three best performance models, as shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4 and Figures 2,3, and 4. The best *financial performance* model showed that when taken together, *number of volunteers* and *systems to capture learning* along with *debt ratio* and *leadership for learning* explained 26% of the variance in *financial performance*. The best *knowledge performance* model showed that when taken together, *number of volunteers* and *systems to capture learning* ,along with *number of volunteers, net assets* and *continuous learning* explained 26% of the variance in *knowledge performance*. The best *mission performance* model showed that *team learning* along with *number of volunteers* and *net assets* when taken together with *continuous learning*, and *savings ratio* explained 16% of the variance in *mission performance*.

Figure 2. Model for Financial Performance



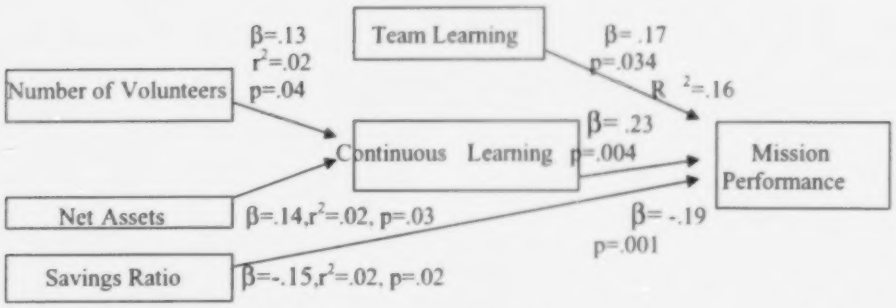
Note. Model Statistics: R^2=.26; F=42.77; p=.000; df=2

Figure 3. Model for Knowledge Performance



Note. Model Statistics: R^2=.25; F=40.59; p=.00; df=2

Figure 4. Model for Mission Performance



Note. Model Statistics: R^2=.16; F=15.30; p=.000; df=3

Table 2

Composite "Best Model" for a Nonprofit Learning Organization

Organization Characteristics	Learning Dimensions	Levels of Learning	Performance
•**High use of volunteers***	•Provide strategic leadership for learning →	Global	
•Low ratio of liabilities to assets, i.e., the organization is financially solvent (debt ratio)	•**Create systems to capture and share learning*** →	Organization	Financial
•**More assets than liabilities; available equity or fund balance (net assets)***	•Encourage collaboration and team learning →	Teams	Knowledge
•Low ratio of surplus to expenses, i.e., the organization spends its money on services	•**Create continuous learning opportunities*** →	Individual	Mission

*Showed a more frequent relationship to performance
Note: Learning takes place at every level: individual, team, organization, and global

Discussion

The following principle conclusions are drawn from this study.

- *Embedded systems to capture and share learning* strongly predict the *financial and knowledge performance* in a NPO. This important learning dimension incorporates the use of two-way communication, easy and quick access to information, maintenance of an up-to-date profile of employee/volunteer skills, the creation and use of effective evaluation methods, sharing with employees and volunteers of lessons learned, and a monitoring of the results of the investments in learning. In other words, learning must not be left to chance or overlooked, but valued and integrated into the organization and the worklife of the employee. Openness in communication, enabling, and development for all is implied. The need for investment in technology and its significance to NPO performance is also shown in these findings. NPOs and their donors and stakeholders must not see this as 'fluff' for their organization, but rather as vital to their existence. As mentioned earlier , donors earmark their monetary gifts for specific services and programs leaving little resources, if any, for equipment to administer the services. Challenges facing NPOs include securing outside funding for the development of both low and high tech systems for learning, and the creation of systems where there is no funding.

- As we move from the information era to the knowledge era, NPOs will need to focus more on human resource development. The NPO's mission of impacting and changing lives is best performed when the staff, on an individual basis, has time and resources to learn and is able to see day-to-day challenges as opportunities to

learn. It is doubtful that NPOs can justify to their donors, above service to their clients, the need for HRD unless they can also show that it is profitable. This study confirms that financially efficient NPOs support individual learning in their organizations. To insure effective NPOs, it is important that consideration and encouragement be given by government and donors for these organizations to invest monies in their staff and not solely in their clients at the expense of significant organizational and staff needs.

- Learning and performance are higher in a NPO when the organization is *financially stable* and has sufficient and skilled *human resources*, including employees and volunteers. NPOs exist in an environment of uncertainty that is difficult for them to control – Will funding allotments be cut? Will volunteers continue to help? Will employees leave for better paying jobs? Who or what will dictate our next services and programs? Can we determine our performance when so much of it depends upon outside stakeholders? If NPOs want to be learning organizations it will be important to strategically plan for a conducive environment for learning, i.e., where human and capital resources are adequate so that energies are not directed solely toward fundraising and services, but the NPO has time and resources to learn and continuously improve.

- *Leadership for learning* is critical to becoming a learning organization. Findings from this study show that this dimension, along with *systems to capture learning*, are most predictive of *financial performance*. Organizations can only become effective if the people who run them are capable of learning continuously and of giving direction and support for learning. While the learning process does not need to be expensive and can be performed with little cost, the leader's time is vital. This may be crucial because most NPOs are small with meager resources (Hodgkinson Weitzman, Abrahams, Crutchfield, & Stevenson, 1996).

- The use of *volunteers* is significant in the learning and the performance of a NPO. In terms of value, there are estimates that voluntary action in the nonprofit sector is at least on par with personal gifts of money and financial assets that these organizations receive (Brown, 1999). According to the findings from this study, volunteers keep a NPO close to their mission. However, the use of volunteers presents a unique management challenge to NPOs, who may work extensively with volunteers in achieving their mission. Many volunteers are with the organization short term, making it difficult for learning to be captured and shared and for any significant human resource development to take place.

Nearly three-fourths of all NPOs have been founded since 1970 (Hodgkinson et al., 1996). Many of these organizations have a short life span because they can not cope with the challenges they face. The possibility of market share is also shrinking with this proliferation. NPO leaders must prepare for increasing competition from other nonprofits. Learning organization dimensions provide the materials to do this. The successful organizations in this study identified skills they needed for future tasks, learned from past mistakes, brought the client into the decision-making process, considered employee morale in their decisions, and empowered others to achieve the organization's vision. They were also innovative in their new services. These NPOs and their leaders will be sought after to meet the needs of society. Leaders of nonprofits must aggressively develop these specific learning organization elements in their organizations, and be prepared to sacrifice to do so. NPOs that can learn and thereby improve their performance will not only impact their clients and their communities, but ultimately all of society.

Implications. HRD can profit from these findings as this field incorporates into their learning and development theory elements that are unique to NPOs. It is important to remember that while NPOs are like for-profit organizations in many ways, they are also unique. HRD can profit by playing to this uniqueness rather than trying to conform the NPOs to the practices of the business world. As we move from the information era to the knowledge era, NPOs will focus more on HRD and additional research will be needed. More HRD departments will be created in NPOs, and the demonstrated benefits in this study for adult learning on an individual, team, organizational, and societal level in NPOs will better inform development in the field.

Future Research. Future studies will need to focus on how to best design learning organizations in human service NPOs. It will also be important to learn how to do this where funding and time for learning is limited or non-existent.

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WORKING DRAFT
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Employee Perceptions of the Meaning of Empowerment

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This study explored the perceptions that non-supervisory employees have of the meaning of empowerment. Analysis of employee interviews resulted in the identification of five major themes ; Impact, Competence, Autonomy, Meaning of Work, and Relationship with Supervisor, which work interdependently as aspects of empowerment. Employees identified everyday type activities as providing empowerment opportunities. Most experiences involved relationships with patients although the employees' relationship with their supervisor was a key aspect to the subjects experience.

Keywords: Empowerment, Employees, Healthcare

Empowerment has become increasingly important to American businesses as it has been linked to employee creativeness (Walton, 1985), commitment (Yankelovitch, 1981), and independence (Berlew, 1986). There is a perception that empowerment of employees may provide a competitive advantage for those who do it well as it is seen as a mechanism to managing change and an approach toward improving the bottom line (Kizilos, 1990).

An emerging definition of empowerment is, "to enable." This implies that activities which enable an individual to act within a particular situation are empowering activities. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions that non-supervisory, medical professional employees have of the meaning of empowerment. Whereas much of the current literature focuses on management interventions to empower employees, very little research has been conducted to determine how employees perceive their own empowerment. Therefore, the major research question is, "What are non-supervisory, medical professional employees perceptions of the meaning of empowerment?" In seeking answers to this question the study will examine the empowered individual's perception of their own empowerment experience. The answer to the research question is significant as it can guide workers, managers and human resource professionals toward the creation of an empowered work force.

Recent work has proposed that empowerment is a multi-dimensional construct (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) having suggested that individuals may identify and interpret empowerment in various ways. Therefore, references to the empowerment construct are found in the psychological, social action and management literature.

According to Spreitzer (1995), psychological empowerment consists of four distinct dimensions; self-determination, competence, meaning and impact. Each dimension interacts with the other dimensions and contributes to the overall construct of an individual's psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Kraimer & Seibert, 1997).

Self-determination has been equated to an individual's sense of choice and is used by Thomas & Velthouse (1990) who proposed a cognitive model of empowerment that focuses primarily on the choice individuals believe they have as well as the influence they experience. This creates a sense of "being enabled" which includes feeling able to perform competently, a sense of self efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and a perception of meaningfulness (Spreitzer, 1995; Fulford & Enz, 1995). In the general business literature autonomy is defined in terms of self-determination and individual choice (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Thomas & Velthouse 1990; Spreitzer, 1995). The basis for this arises from DeCharms'(1968) concept of locus of causality where the individual believes he or she is the origin of his or her own behavior. In health care, particularly nursing, autonomy references how nurses practice their craft. To be autonomous means to be able to make independent decisions and, to be accountable for those decisions. According to Collins & Henderson (1991) and Sabiston & Laschinger (1995) the pathway to autonomous nursing practice is built on the expert knowledge of the practitioner. Therefore, if the nurse has the appropriate knowledge and skill to initiate action, carry out action and, to be responsible for the result, then she is

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practicing autonomously (Collins & Henderson, 1991). Defining autonomy in this way suggests self-determination and competence are components of autonomy. Dwyer, Schwartz & Fox (1992) discovered in their study of 151 nurses that they differed in their need for autonomy. As that difference emerged, the type of support needed from management changed. Those who needed more autonomy tended to desire less direction from management while those who had a lower need for autonomy needed more management direction.

Chandler (1992) conducted a study in which she interviewed 56 nurses asking them to describe both a situation in which they felt empowered and one in which they felt powerless. After the interviews were recorded and transcribed a content analysis was performed that identified themes. Of the fifty-six nurses interviewed, fifty-seven percent reported being empowered by their interactions with patients and families. The interactions included their professional duties of assessment, intervention, changing, and responding. These duties included activities such as teaching, supporting, comforting and advocating. In addition, twenty-three percent of the respondents reported empowerment when interacting with the physician in a collaborative manner. Therefore, eighty percent of the subjects found being involved in a significant relationship as an experience where they felt empowered. Other empowerment experiences were working as a team, being complemented by the nurse manager and feeling good about being a nurse. The largest source of powerlessness was from a negative interaction with the physician

DeCharms (1968) has indicated that individuals need to feel as though they are personally competent in their environment. Competence, as defined by Gist (1987), is the belief that one has the skills and abilities needed to perform the job. They gain this competence through the acquisition of knowledge and, by mastering skills. According to Kieffer (1984), competence is a product of experience and subsequent reflection. Kieffer referred to this relationship between experience and reflection as praxis and stated that it brings forth new understandings which results in more effective actions. Although individuals may become more competent through various experiences, Rappaport (1984) posited that empowerment implies an individual is already competent and will use that competence given the opportunity. In this sense competence may be viewed as a precursor to empowerment.

Meaning is another of Spreitzer's (1995) dimensions of empowerment. Brief & Nord (1990) have stated that "meaning is defined as a fit between the requirements of the job tasks and one's own values, beliefs, and behaviors." Therefore, a worker's motivation is most likely to occur when the value of the work activity is seen as positive and when the expectation exists that the behaviors implemented will result in the desired outcome (Kleiber & Maehr, 1985). Shamir (1991) has stated that a task could motivate an individual, even in the absence of any rewards, because it has meaning for them while Thomas & Velthouse (1990) have related meaning to the intrinsic caring about a given task and have indicated that a person whose work is meaningful is likely to be empowered by the work.

According to Ashforth (1989) and Spreitzer (1996), impact is a belief that an individual has about their own ability to have significant influence over outcomes at work. It is also a key to psychological empowerment. Important to the understanding of impact is the notion that the individual is aware of the influence their actions have had on work activities (Kraimer & Seibert, 1997). However, the ability to have impact is related to having access to the sources of empowerment (Sabiston & Laschinger, 1995). According to Sabiston & Laschinger those sources are support, information, resources and opportunities. Therefore, impact is identified as only one aspect of empowerment which must be integrated with others to be fully meaningful.

The social action and community psychology literature has explored many of the same elements identified in psychological empowerment but does so in the context of community groups and social needs. This research serves as a bridge between psychological empowerment and managerial empowerment emphasizing peer support and empowerment in a group setting. In the community setting empowerment has been viewed as the "mechanism by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their lives," (Rappaport, 1984) implying that individuals possess and can develop the skills necessary to become empowered. Kieffer's (1984) study supported this having illustrated the development of 15 individuals from powerless to being empowered. Rappaport suggested that empowerment is different for different people in different settings and though it may be the result of some purposeful program it is more likely to be found when true collaboration occurs among professionals and the beneficiaries of their interventions. His assertions were supported by Corsun & Enz (1997) as they studied empowerment within an organizational context. They saw the relationship between the dimensions of empowerment (meaning, self-efficacy and competence) and peer helping behaviors and, also asserted that formal empowerment attempts by an organization might fail because the organization has not created a "relationship-based", supportive and caring work environment" for the employee.

Cousun & Enz's work is illustrative of the research that comprises the work on leadership, management and organizations. Within this body of literature are the actions and structures of the work place that either nurture or

limit the individual's ability to be empowered. Burns (1978) viewed empowering managers as those who activate and mobilize subordinates. Kouzes & Posner (1995) identified this as "enabling others to act," and Sashkin (1982) labeled it as participative management. According to Sashkin, this participation can take various forms including: participation in goal setting, decision making, problem solving and change. All forms involve some sharing of power that creates conditions for empowerment (Burke, 1986). As a part of sharing power Burke stated that empowerment should come from a person's involvement in significant and relevant tasks.

Likewise, Kouzes and Posner (1995) wrote that "*feeling powerful - literally feeling "able" -comes from a deep sense of being in control of our own lives.* Any leadership practice that increases another's sense of self-confidence, self-determination, and personal effectiveness makes that person more powerful and greatly enhances the possibility of success."

Empowering leaders may also provide information to individuals. One illustration of this is provided in a quote from a manager interviewed by Kouzes and Posner (1995) who said, "If I had to tell you in one sentence why I am motivated by my job, it is because when I know what is going on, and how I fit into the overall picture, it makes me feel important." According to Kouzes and Posner (1995), "without information, people won't extend themselves to take responsibility; armed with information, people's creative energies can be harnessed to achieve extraordinary results. Information empowers people, strengthening their resolve and providing them with the resources they need to be successful."

Kouzes and Posner (1995) also indicated that leaders influence individual workers negatively by exerting too much control. They stated that "the most insidious thing about external control is that it actually erodes the intrinsic motivation that a person might have for a task," (p. 181). According to Mainiero (1986), "individuals in highly dependent or powerless jobs are more likely to give up than individuals in powerful jobs." Lorsch (1970) stated that jobs should be divided to give the individual meaningful work over which he or she can have some feeling of control and influence. Kanter's (1993) theory suggested that work behaviors and attitudes are partially the result of the individual's position within the organization as well as the situations that the individual faces. She stressed the importance of these workplace factors and de-emphasized the importance of the individual's personality and upbringing. Kanter further indicated that power is the result of the individual being able to access and mobilize certain empowerment structures including support, information, resources and opportunities. This theory was supported when Sabiston & Laschinger (1995) found that nurses perceived that they had a moderate degree of job-related empowerment and a moderate degree of access to those four empowerment structures indicating a correlation between the two.

The purpose of this study was to explore non-supervisory, medical professional employee perceptions of the meaning of empowerment. Therefore the research method was an exploratory, phenomenological design. Data was collected through in-depth individual interviews. Three sites, all not-for-profit hospitals, were chosen in which to conduct the study. Since the researcher is an insider at one site, that site was chosen for a pilot study as well as one of the three main study sites. Two other sites that are in close proximity and, similar in size to the first site were also chosen for the study. The similarity in regard to type of business and location was important in order to reduce variations in tasks and geographical differences. Additionally, the researcher had greater opportunities for entry into those sites and therefore the cost of the study was kept within budgetary constraints.

Permission to conduct the study was first obtained from the sites. Each site preferred a different method of introducing the study to its employees. One site designated an internal person to coordinate the effort with the researcher. A second site announced the study through its organization's newsletter and communication to its managers and a third site solicited a manager's help directly. Since the research purpose was to explore the perceptions that non-supervisory, medical professions have of the meaning of empowerment it was important to identify potential interviewees who had some experience, by their own definition, with empowerment. Having the potential interviewees self-select into the study ensured an experience of empowerment and a willingness to discuss that experience. Therefore, all of the potential interviewees who indentified an interest in the study were selected to participate in an interview regardless of how they personally defined empowerment. The objective of this study was to explore their own individual perceptions of empowerment not necessarily to explore similar perceptions. The potential interviewees responded directly to the researcher. Letters introducing the study, the researcher and the requirements of the study and the confidentiality with which the interview would be conducted were then sent to them. Each interview was audiotaped and later transcribed. Each interview was held privately and each interviewee was asked to describe in detail a work situation where she felt empowered.

For the purpose of this study a non-management medical professional was defined as an individual who had no direct responsibility for the performance appraisal of another worker and, is employed in a position that requires a

professional license or certification. A pilot study was conducted with three individuals from one of the three sites. Four employees from each of the three sites were then interviewed as part of the main study for a total of fifteen individuals interviewed. Although the study was open to all non-supervisory medical professionals, eleven of the twelve main study interviewees were nurses.

The written transcripts of the interviews were analyzed using Giorgi's (1985) model. This included an initial reading of the transcript to gain an overall sense of the entire interview and, a second reading to note major themes or main ideas. Once recurrent themes had been identified, the interview tapes were listened to again to determine if the language used, voice inflections, pauses, etc., held significance for the meaning extracted from the text. The transcript was read a third time to place meanings gained from the tape into the text. An essay reflecting the interviewee's perspective was then constructed. A copy of the actual transcript and essay were given to the interviewee for review and, the final essays were reviewed by an independent third party reviewer who had experience in the health care field for the purpose of reducing bias, confirming results and validating the themes.

In examining the transcripts and essays of all of the interviewees, five major themes emerged. Those themes were: Impact, Competence, Autonomy, Meaning of Work and, Supervisory Relationship. Impact concerns the notion that the individual is aware of the influence their actions have on work activities. In this study the interviewees indicated that having an impact was important to their empowerment experience. They talked about "making a difference" in the lives of patients and families. A key aspect of this theme was that the impact that was made did not have to be one of great overall significance. The interviewees related stories of keeping the patient from feeling pain, making the patient's day a little bit better or, teaching the patient about their disease process. One interviewee, Kristine, described her impact like this; "... the next day when I gave her the big bath and I did her fingernails there was the biggest smile and the tear out of her eye that made me feel like 'yes,' I did something for this person that made a difference. Even though it's something little, it made a difference to them. And the family, they were just like "Oh!'... all crying, and it's going to make me cry!" For the organization these situations appear to be of minor importance when compared with major budgetary or medical decisions. For the caregiver, instances like these were successful interventions that contributed to their feelings of empowerment.

A second theme, competence, was also identified. In this study competence consisted of the knowledge, skills, abilities and confidence needed to perform required work. Interviewees in this study indicated that they already possessed the knowledge needed to perform the job prior to their experience of empowerment although some did indicate that they also gained knowledge from the empowerment experience itself. This knowledge and overall competence was obtained primarily from their professional training and their prior experiences on the job. Prior experiences were identified as being very important by interviewees who worked on shifts in which there was no supervisor present. These experiences allowed them to make informed decisions when there was no supervisor available with which to confer. The interviewees indicated that conversations with supervisors reinforced their confidence in their skills and knowledge, which prompted them to continue with their experience.

The process of self-reflection was identified by half of the interviewees as having occurred during or after the noted experience and accounted for an increase in knowledge, skill or confidence. According to the literature, the process of reflection is central to adult learning (Jarvis, 1987; Kieffer, 1984). One nurse, in reflecting on a devastating moment during her empowerment experience, stated, "I have failed! But then you reevaluate the situation and, OK, what's really going on here? And then, what do I need to do? What's my plan? And then set some goals. It's just a never ending circle of reevaluation."

Autonomy was identified as a third theme of this study. Autonomy is related to having the permission to act, in most cases, on the behalf of the patient. Each interviewee in this study believed that they had a certain amount of freedom to act while in the situation they described as their experience of empowerment. For some, the autonomy they experienced was a condition which was granted to them by their supervisor, their position in the organization and, by their professional license. Likewise, feeling responsible for the patient and certain activities related to the care of the patient were embedded in the job itself and the professional license. One nurse indicated how a sense of responsibility flows from her license and position as a registered nurse; "I think that is the job of a registered nurse. Different people have different feelings about where their responsibility ends and that kind of thing but I think that you know, as his nurse, it was my responsibility. It was just mine because he was my patient for the evening. Just the ethical code that I took on when I became a nurse." A license or an otherwise clearly defined role in which authority is granted may provide what is needed for a person to operate autonomously.

As with responsibility, willingness to initiate action also appeared as a sub-set to this theme of autonomy. Half of the interviewees indicated they initiated action in their empowerment experience while the remaining half

indicated that their supervisors had initiated the first contact with them which allowed them to initiate other actions to continue with the experience.

A fourth theme identified in this study was that of Meaning of Work. This is best explained by one of the interviewees who stated, "This is going to be my life time work. It's rewarding for me that I know that during that eight hour shift I made a difference. Nothing major. I don't think in terms of big rewards or major life changing events... . But I know, for that night and maybe he was just more comfortable the next day. I know for myself that I've made a difference with my patients and I think that's what helps me enjoy my job." For the majority of the interviewees, achieving results that related to making someone else's life better is what made their work meaningful and indicates why they had such a high level of commitment. It was evident within the study that the interviewees personal values played a role in how they attributed meaning to their empowerment experience as the activities they were engaged in; teaching, supporting, comforting and advocating had personal importance to them. For some, those activities were expressly related to issues they had dealt with earlier in their lives. One nurse specifically indicated how empowered she became when she taught others, relating that situation to her own difficulties as a learning disabled child.

The terms "accountable" and "responsible" were used by the interviewees when talking about meaning. Each felt as though they were personally accountable and responsible for the task they were performing at that time and, to not accomplish it was not acceptable. This meant working through obstacles and taking risks that they might not have otherwise taken. The nurses in the study referred to their nursing license and their own definition of what it means to be a nurse as indications of their commitment to, what they perceived, as their responsibility.

The final theme identified in this study was that of Supervisor Relationship. Supervisors were involved in the interviewee's empowerment experiences at different levels. For some, their supervisor initiated the action that involved the interviewee in the experience. For others, their supervisor was used as a confidant and advisor; a person they went to when they engaged an obstacle or were less certain of the appropriate approach to take. However, for most of the interviewees the supervisor was not directly involved in the experience of empowerment at all. Regardless, the relationship that existed between the interviewees and their supervisor was important to them. The interviewees attributed some of their ability to proceed through their empowerment activity to the "trusting" relationship they believed existed between them and their supervisor. Their ability to move forward was due in part to the belief they had that their supervisor would support their efforts. This belief had been formed from previous situations in which the individuals felt they had received some sort of support. The relationship with their supervisor was also important for the individuals who had actually communicated with their supervisor at a point within the activity. One of the interviewees indicated that had she not received support from her supervisor than she most likely would have not pursued the issue that led to her experience of empowerment. She stated that her supervisor allowed her to blow "off a little steam," listened to her account of the situation and then indicated her agreement with the interviewee's assessment of the situation.

Empowerment is often conceived as a delegation of power or a program initiated by management which allows employees the opportunity to participate in problem solving not usually recognized as a part of the employee's regular job duties. For the majority of individuals in this study empowerment was not the result of any specific management action. Instead, it was comprised of a number of themes, which worked in unison to provide the feeling of empowerment. Any of the themes may have been the focus of the empowerment discussion for any one of the individual interviewees but each described a situation that was multidimensional in regard to empowerment themes. Additionally, these themes came together, not during an extraordinary event but, during typical daily events that could conceivably occur a number of times within a normal work day. As such, they were centered on relationships between the care givers and their patients. These relationships, and the responsibility that was felt for the well-being of the patient, provided much of the meaning for the interviewees in this study. This was a finding of Chandler's (1992) study as well. Sometimes the relationship was an interactive one where the care givers communication with, and treatment of, the patient was the major activity and sometimes it was the care givers concern over the patient's well-being that lead to an intervention on the patient's behalf. In addition, the role of the supervisor in the empowerment process was described in this study as a relationship of trust. This relationship, for all interviewees, had been built over time prior to the empowerment experience and, had assisted the individual in proceeding with the activities of the experience regardless of the supervisors absence or presence during the actual empowerment experience.

These different aspects of empowerment and the relationship between them further support previous theories of empowerment being a multidimensional construct. Additionally, this study furthers the theory by including the importance of the supervisory aspect as part of an overall construct of empowerment.

The results of this study have implications for the health care industry, business leaders and HRD professionals. H.R.D. professionals are often contracted with to help build teams within organizations. Traditionally, team building includes the creation of trusting relationships. The results of this study support the importance of trust between employee and supervisor as a key aspect of empowerment. The building of trust appears to allow for both employee and supervisor initiated experiences, which lead to empowerment. Trust also appears to allow empowering situations to emerge from everyday work activities as individuals will proceed with empowering activities in the absence of permission from their supervisor when they perceive the relationship between them and their supervisor is a trusting one. In helping supervisors develop empowerment activities, HRD professionals should first look at the level of trust that exists between the supervisor and those employees reporting to him or her. Teaching supervisors to develop trusting relationships is a key step toward empowerment. Absence of a trusting relationship may be enough to keep individuals from engaging in activities that are empowering.

In addition to building trust, supervisors need to learn about and develop their skill at providing support to employees. This may be providing the employee with permission to pursue an activity that is a part of their responsibility but one where the employee is not taking initiative because of perceived constraints. Being able to encourage and, knowing how to give permission to act are examples of support that relate to acts of empowerment.

Operations managers also will call upon HRD professionals to assist with job evaluation, productivity improvements and change initiatives. Professionals should be aware that, in accordance with the results of this study, changes in job tasks that take the employee away from their core work may also result in missed opportunities for empowerment as this study concluded employees were likely to find empowerment in everyday work situations. Additionally, managers should exercise caution in pulling employees away from daily work duties if those duties are the core of the job and, if the employee has pursued that profession because of the meaning those duties provide. Even different tasks that may seem empowering to the manager may be construed by the employee as an interruption or inconvenience to them as it takes them away from a task that is meaningful. Jobs and job duties that an employee currently perceives as empowering must be replaced with other empowering work if changes need to be made. HRD professionals should be able to alert supervisors to these needs and offer suggestions on suitable options.

Similarly, HRD professionals are often asked to participate in or lead the organization in empowerment efforts with the expectation that a program will be constructed which empowers employees through the use of methods such as committee involvement and increased departmental responsibilities. However, attempts to empower employees by taking them away from their source of meaning with the lure of greater responsibility may actually be disempowering. Therefore, an organization may consider replacing empowerment programs with organizational wide empowerment initiatives.

In regard to the training needs of employees, the results of this study indicate that autonomy in work is partially a function of expert knowledge. This suggests that employees may need certain training and education prior to being able to utilize the experiences in the job that are naturally empowering. It also suggests that any training or education that adds to a base of expert knowledge may have a benefit in future experiences of empowerment. Whereas specific job training may have an immediate use, training and education that increases expert knowledge may eventually produce benefits in regard to increased confidence and a willingness to act which in turn may lead to empowering actions.

This study also has implications for the Health Care Industry and supervisors in general. One major implication is the importance of the relationship between the professional caregiver and the patient. The empowerment of patient care staff is more likely to occur when the relationship between the employee and the patient is allowed to develop. Any activity that pulls the employee away from the patient potentially lessens the opportunities to be empowered. Understanding what is meaningful to workers and allowing them to participate in meaningful work is important. For many medical professionals, meaning is found within the core work of their chosen profession. The interviewees of this study defined that meaning most often as "helping others."

By illustrating the importance and relationship of supervisor contributions to employee empowerment this study furthers the knowledge of the empowerment construct. Aspects of trust and support provided by the supervisor prior to the empowerment experience become an integral part of whether or not an individual will experience empowerment in the work setting. While the concept of trust is not new, the results of this study suggest that it is vital to the empowerment of the individual if they are to be able to engage in the kinds of activities that bring about the empowerment experience. This also supports the notion that empowerment is dependent on other, well performed, leadership practices and cannot be implemented as a separate organizational activity.

Whereas empowerment has often been viewed as the result of specific organizational programming or the provision of an extraordinary opportunity afforded an employee who rose to the occasion creating an often-dramatic result, this study shows that empowerment is readily available to the typical employee while engaged in the more ordinary tasks of the job. This moves our understanding of empowerment from the concept of a specialized effort to one of an opportunity that is constantly available.

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